

PRAYERS OF THE DESERT



INTRODUCTION

THE original monks of the Egyptian desert have left us tremendous treasures that speak to us across the centuries. Their survival is a testament to the Spirit of God which inspired them, and their words have much to offer us today.

THE RULE OF SAINT PACHOMIOS (page 5) was revealed to the saint by an angel. After receiving this prayer rule, he maintained it faithfully throughout his life, reciting it at every hour of the day and night. It is a simple prayer rule and ideal for memorization, which can be said in any place or at any time.

THE SERVICE OF THE TWELVE PSALMS (page 11) developed out of the early monastic services, which featured the structured reading of the entire Psalter each day. Over time, other hymns and prayers came to be added to the daily services; but at the same time, the simpler Twelve Psalms service remained as a substitute for Matins, Vespers, and the Lesser Hours. It was prayed especially in small

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Translations by Archimandrite Ephrem Lash.
Edited and designed by Rdr. John Dykstra.
Project oversight by David DeJonge.

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monasteries, or *sketes*, where the proper liturgical resources were not available, or monks did not have the skill or ability to perform the standard services. Note that the Twelve Psalms are not meant to replace the regular prayer rule, but to compliment it, as church services compliment our daily prayers.

In today's world, we see how easily our access to the Church's divine services can be cut off, whether due to pandemic, civil unrest, or violence. God forbid, but we cannot take for granted that we will always be able to attend Church when we desire it. To remain in the life of the Church, we may be required to take on the responsibility of prayer ourselves. In this, we can look to our spiritual ancestors of the desert, who became like angels in their simple lives of constant prayer.

Whether prevented from attending Church due to illness, travel, or other circumstances, or if one simply desires to observe the Church's cycle of prayer in an uncomplicated way, these time-tested prayers have led countless souls on the road to salvation. †



THE RULE OF ST. PACHOMIOS

THROUGH the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Glory to you, our God, glory to you.

Heavenly King, Paraclete, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere, filling all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and dwell in us, cleanse us from every stain, and, O Good One, save our souls.

¶ *The prayer HEAVENLY KING is not said from Pascha until Pentecost. But from Pascha until its Leaving, say the Paschal Troparion, CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD... three times in its place.*

THE TRISAGION PRAYERS

Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. **(3)**

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, forgive our sins. Master, pardon our iniqui-

In One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

THE JESUS PRAYER

LORD, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. **(100)**

THE DISMISSAL

It is truly right to call you blessed, who gave birth to God, ever-blessed and most pure and the Mother of our God. Greater in honor than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, without corruption you gave birth to God the Word, truly the Mother of God, we magnify you.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. **(3)** Lord, bless.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen. ✠



THE SERVICE OF THE TWELVE PSALMS

THROUGH the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Glory to you, our God, glory to you.

Heavenly King, Paraclete, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere, filling all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and dwell in us, cleanse us from every stain, and, O Good One, save our souls.

¶ *The prayer HEAVENLY KING is not said from Pascha until Pentecost. But from Pascha until its Leave-taking, say the Paschal Troparion, CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD... three times in its place.*

THE TRISAGION PRAYERS

Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. **(3)**

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, forgive our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. **(3)**

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father in heaven, may your name be hallowed, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. **(12)**

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

¶ *Now continue with the appointed Stases (sections) according to the chart on the next page.*

After saying the usual beginning prayers (pages 11–12), continue with the Stases appointed for the present service:

OUTSIDE LENT		
FOR SERVICE	STASES	PAGES
Matins	1, 2, 3, 4	14 – 43
The Hours	1, 2	14 – 26
Vespers	3, 4	27 – 43
Compline	3, 4	27 – 43

DURING LENT		
FOR SERVICE	STASES	PAGES
Matins	1, 2, 3, 4	14 – 43
The Hours	1, 2, 3	14 – 33
Vespers	1, 2, 3	14 – 33
Compline	4	34 – 43

And finally, after completing the appointed Stases, conclude at all times with the Dismissal (page 44).



FIRST STASIS

Come, let us worship and fall down before the King, our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ the King, our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ himself, the King, our God.

PSALM 26

THE Lord is my enlightenment and my Savior; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

When evildoers came against me to eat up my flesh, my persecutors and my enemies, they fainted and fell.

Though an army should array itself against me, my heart shall not be afraid; though war should rise up against me, in this I am confident.

I have asked one thing of the Lord, this I will earnestly seek: That I should dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I should behold the fair beauty of the Lord,

and survey his temple.

For in the day of my afflictions he hid me in his tabernacle, he sheltered me in the secret of his tabernacle, he set me up on a rock.

And now, behold, he has lifted up my head over my enemies.

I went around and offered in his tabernacle the sacrifice of rejoicing; I will sing, I will sing psalms to the Lord.

Lord, hear my voice which I have raised; have mercy on me, and hear me.

My heart said to you: I have diligently sought your face. Lord, I will seek your face.

Do not turn your face away from me; do not turn away from your servant in anger.

Be my helper; do not forsake me, and do not overlook me, God my Savior.

My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord has taken me to himself.

Lord, teach me your way, and guide me in a right path because of my enemies.

Do not hand me over to the desire of those who torment me, for unjust witnesses have risen up against me, and injustice has lied within herself.

I believe that I will see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.

Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and let your heart be strengthened, and wait on the Lord.

PSALM 31

BLESSED are those whose iniquities have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered.

Blessed is the one to whom the Lord imputes no sin and in whose mouth there is no guile.

Because I kept silent, my bones grew old from my crying out all day long.

Because night and day your hand was heavy upon me, I was turned to wretchedness by a thorn stuck fast in me.

I acknowledged my sin, and did not hide my iniquity. I said: Against myself I will admit my iniquity to the Lord. And you forgave the ungodliness of my heart.

For this every holy one will pray to you at a fitting moment; except in a flood of many waters they will not come near him.

For you are my refuge from the affliction which surrounds me, my joy to deliver me from those who have surrounded me.

I will make you understand and guide you in the way in which you should go; I will fix my eyes upon you.

Do not become like horse and mule, who have no understanding; with bit and bridle you must constrain their cheeks so that they do not come near you.

Many are the scourges of the sinner, but mercy will surround the one who hopes in the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord, and be glad, you righteous, and boast, all you upright in heart.

PSALM 56

HAVE mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me; because my soul has trusted in you.

And in the shadow of your wings I shall hope, until iniquity pass by.

I will cry to God Most High, the God who has done good things for me.

He sent from heaven and saved me; he gave to reproach those who trampled on me.

God has sent forth his mercy and his truth, and he has delivered my soul from the midst of lions' cubs; I lay down to sleep, but I am troubled.

As for the sons of men, their teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and your glory above all the earth.

They have set a trap for my feet, and have bowed down my soul.

They have dug a pit before me and have fallen into it themselves.

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; I will sing, I will sing psalms.

Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I will rise early.

Lord, I will give thanks to you among the nations, I will sing to you among the nations.

For your mercy has been magnified even to the heavens, and your truth to the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and your glory above all the earth.

THE TRISAGION PRAYERS

Holy God... All-holy Trinity... Our Father...

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

TROPARIA. TONE 1

Make haste and open to me your fatherly embrace. Like the Prodigal, I have squandered my whole livelihood. As I look to the inexhaustible wealth of your mercy, do not now despise my beggared heart, for to you, Lord, with compunction I cry: I have sinned against you. Save me!

Glory to the Father...

When you come to earth with glory, O God, the whole world will tremble. The river of fire will flow from your judgment seat, the books will be opened, and the secrets will be revealed. Deliver me then from that unquenchable fire, and count me worthy to stand at your right hand, O Judge most just.

Both now and forever...

All we who with longing flee for refuge to your goodness know you to be Mother of God and after childbirth still truly Virgin; for